

R 161218Z APR 94
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4680
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
USIA WASHDC 1464
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 002051

USIA FOR NEA (HUNTER/KHOURY), R (POLLACK), P/G

E.O.12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: THE SAUDI MAJLIS ASH-SHURA: NO PROBLEMS,
NO VISITORS, NO VISIBLE RESULTS

REF: (A) 93 RIYADH 8901, (B) 93 JEDDAH 2550,
(C) 93 RIYADH 4727

¶1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

¶2. SUMMARY: MAJLIS ASH-SHURA PRESIDENT MOHAMMED BIN JUBAIR REVIEWED IN GENERAL TERMS THE WORK OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA, ASSERTING THAT IT WAS PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY AND SATISFACTORILY. HE SAID, WITHOUT ELABORATION, THAT THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA HAS NOT YET ESTABLISHED A VISITORS POLICY. ON FOREIGN POLICY, BIN JUBAIR SAID THAT THE ATTAINMENT OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAS PARAMOUNT, THAT HE SUPPORTED U.S. PRESSURE ON NORTH KOREA (BUT WONDERED WHY THE U.S. DOES NOT APPLY EQUAL PRESSURE ON ISRAEL BECAUSE OF ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS), AND THAT HE APPROVED OF RECENT U.N. ACTIONS IN BOSNIA. END SUMMARY.

¶3. CHARGE APRIL 13 MET WITH MAJLIS ASH-SHURA (CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL) PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD BIN JUBAIR TO OFFER HIS PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS ON THE INAUGURATION OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA BY KING FAHD LAST DECEMBER 29 (REF A) AND TO REVIEW WITH BIN JUBAIR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BODY SINCE THEN.

REVIEWS WORK OF COUNCIL: NO PROBLEMS

¶4. BIN JUBAIR SAID THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL WAS GOING SMOOTHLY. COMMITTEES, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMEN HAD BEEN NAMED AND EVERYONE WAS VERY BUSY AT WORK. THE COUNCIL MEETS TWICE A MONTH (ON SUNDAYS) AND ITS COMMITTEES MEET ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK. HE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL IS CURRENTLY FOCUSING ITS ATTENTION ON "REGULATIONS" AND "INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS."

¶5. REVIEWING PROCEDURE -- AND CONFIRMING INFORMATION GIVEN TO US IN DECEMBER BY MAJLIS ASH-SHURA VICE PRESIDENT ABDULLAH NASEEF (REF B) -- BIN JUBAIR SAID THAT AFTER A COMMITTEE HAS STUDIED AN ISSUE, IT SENDS A REPORT TO THE FULL COUNCIL. IF THERE ARE OBJECTIONS IN THE COUNCIL, THE REPORT IS REVIEWED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL (COMPRISED OF THE PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN) WHICH DECIDES WHETHER THE REPORT IS TO BE SENT BACK TO COMMITTEE FOR FURTHER WORK OR FORWARDED TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR ACTION.

¶6. ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA AND THE REGIONAL COUNCILS, BIN JUBAIR SAID THAT THERE WAS AS YET NO WORKING RELATIONSHIP. BUT HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE REGIONAL BODIES AND THE MAJLIS MIGHT IN FUTURE SHARE "STUDIES AND OPINIONS ON CERTAIN TOPICS," PERHAPS THROUGH AN ANNUAL JOINT MEETING WHICH MIGHT "OPEN A NEW ERA FOR CONSULTATION, DISCUSSIONS AND NEW IDEAS."

¶7. RESPONDING TO CHARGE'S QUESTION AS TO HOW OTHER SAG GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WERE REACTING TO THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA, BIN JUBAIR SAID THAT THE MINISTRIES WERE GENERALLY PLEASED WITH THE FACT THAT THEY COULD REFER THEIR PROBLEMS/ISSUES TO THE MAJLIS WHERE SPECIALISTS

COULD STUDY AND THEN RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS FOR THEM. HE NOTED HERE THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE THREE "POWERS" IN THE KINGDOM -- THE JUDICIAL, THE EXECUTIVE, AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL -- THE JUDICIAL (THE ISLAMIC LAW OF THE SHARIA) WAS SUPREME, I.E. THAT THERE WAS NO SET OF CHECKS AND BALANCES AT WORK, BUT RATHER LAW DERIVED FROM THE QURAN WITH WHICH THE BEHAVIOR OF RULERS AND COUNCILS ALIKE MUST BE CONSISTENT.

UNTIL PROCEDURES ARE ANNOUNCED: NO VISITORS

¶8. CHARGE ASKED WHETHER THE MAJLIS HAD DEVELOPED A VISITORS POLICY. HE NOTED THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA IN THE U.S. -- THAT NEWS OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE MAJLIS IN DECEMBER HAD MADE THE EVEN LOCAL CALIFORNIA PAPERS WHERE CHARGE HAD BEEN ON LEAVE -- AND THAT FUTURE OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL VISITORS TO THE KINGDOM WOULD CERTAINLY BE SEEKING TO MEET WITH MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

¶9. JUBAIR SAID THAT THERE WAS AS YET NO PROCEDURE WHEREBY FOREIGN ACADEMICS, DIPLOMATS OR HIGH-RANKING VISITORS COULD ARRANGE FOR VISITS WITH MEMBERS OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA, BUT THAT HE EXPECTED THAT THERE WOULD BE A WRITTEN POLICY IN THE FUTURE. HE SAID THAT THOSE WISHING TO MEET WITH MAJLIS OFFICIALS NEEDED FOR THE TIME BEING TO SUBMIT FORMAL DIPLOMATIC REQUESTS TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WHICH WOULD THEN CONSULT WITH THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT (I.E. BIN JUBAIR).

THE PEACE PROCESS: NUMBER ONE PRIORITY

¶10. INVITED TO COMMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, BIN JUBAIR SAID THAT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY AND THAT SAUDI ARABIA "HOPED, WANTED AND EXPECTED" THAT U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD BE "FAIR." HE FURTHER NOTED THAT HE AGREED WITH U.S. PRESSURE ON NORTH KOREA TO LIMIT NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION, BUT WONDERED WHY THE U.S. WAS NOT PRESSURING ISRAEL AS WELL. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS APPROVAL OF RECENT U.N. ACTIONS IN BOSNIA.

¶11. CHARGE SAID THAT THE U.S. IS WORKING HARD TO HELP ACHIEVE PEACE IN THE REGION AND THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ONE COULD FIND A COUNTRY AS FAIR IN ITS EFFORTS. CHARGE ALSO EXPLAINED THAT ISRAEL IS ONE OF THREE NON-SIGNATORIES OF THE NPT. THE U.S. IS PRESSURING NORTH KOREA BECAUSE IT SIGNED THE NPT AND THEN LIED ABOUT THE NATURE OF ITS NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES. CHARGE NOTED THAT UNIVERSALITY OF NPT ADHERENCE IS U.S. POLICY, A POSITION THAT IS WELL KNOWN TO ISRAEL. FROM TIME TO TIME, WE REITERATE OUR VIEWS ON THIS TO ISRAEL.

WHILE WAITING FOR RESULTS: NO DISTRACTIONS

¶13. COMMENT: BIN JUBAIR AND OTHER SAG OFFICIALS HAVE TAKEN PAINS TO EXPLAIN TO US THAT THEY VIEW THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA AS A CONSULTATIVE, BUT NOT A DEMOCRATIC OR A LEISLATIVE BODY. IT MAY BE THAT THE SAG HOPES THAT THE DELIBERATIONS OF THIS BODY, GUIDED BY THE SAUD LEADERSHIP, WILL INCREASE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME AS IT ENTERS A PERIOD OF TOUGH FINANCIAL TIMES REQUIRING TOUGH REFORMS. THE SAG MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT AS THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA FINDS ITS OWN WAY AND UNTIL IT HAS ESTABLISHED SOME RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT, THAT IT DOES NOT WANT ITS MEMBERS DISTRACTED BY THE QUERIES OF FOREIGN ACADEMICS, DIPLOMATS OR OFFICIALS PUSHING HIDDEN (DEMOCRATIC) AGENDAS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR OFFICIAL ACCESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MAJLIS (WE DO MEET MAJLIS MEMBERS UNOFFICIALLY FROM TIME TO TIME ALTHOUGH THEY APPEAR TO BE UNDER SOME SORT OF GAG RULE).

¶14. IN CHARGE'S THIRD MEETING WITH HIM (OTHER MEETINGS

OCCURRED IN JANUARY AND JULY OF LAST YEAR), BIN JUBAIR SEEMED RELAXED, CONFIDENT AND READY TO DISCUSS MAJLIS AFFAIRS, IF ON HIS OWN TERMS. HE STRUCK US AS SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE CERTAIN RELIABILITY OF HIS ISLAMIC MORAL COMPASS AND WHO IS CONFIDENT THAT FOLLOWING IT WILL LEAD TO THE REQUIRED SOLUTIONS. WITH THAT CONFIDENCE BIN JUBAIR SEEMS BENT ON MOVING AT HIS OWN DELIBERATE PACE ON WHAT HE SEES TO BE THE NECESSARY WORK OF THE MAJLIS ASH-SHURA IN THE FACE OF WHATEVER SKEPTICISM MAY EXIST INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE KINGDOM.
END COMMENT.

WELCH